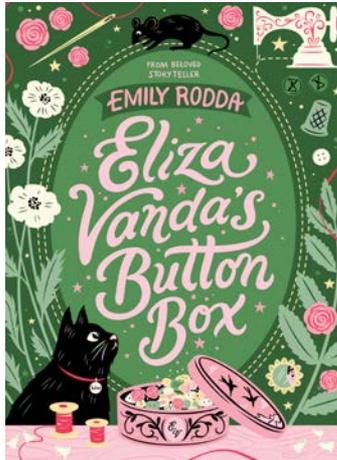


# Classroom Resources



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## Eliza Vanda's Button Box Emily Rodda

### BOOK SUMMARY

Buttons three, attend to me!  
Take me where I want to be!

*No one saw Eliza Vanda arrive in Tidgy Bay that rainy winter afternoon. The sign advertising 'Cabins for Rent' was almost hidden by a pile of builder's rubble, but Eliza Vanda didn't seem at all put out by the mess.*

*'This is a nice little pocket,' she said. 'It should suit us very well.'*

Life hasn't been much fun for Milly Dynes lately. There seem to be problems everywhere she looks. She's always loved her home in Tidgy Bay, but at the moment she wishes she was somewhere – anywhere – else.

Then Eliza Vanda turns up-and magic comes with her ...

A sparkling new fantasy adventure from multi-award-winning author Emily Rodda.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELA1502
- ACELT1608
- ACELT1609
- ACELT1612
- ACELT1798
- ACELY1700

### THEMES

- Family
- Belonging
- Magic
- Identity
- Resilience

**Recommended Ages:** 8+

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# Classroom Resources

## During Reading

Milly feels as if 'the earth was shifting under her feet' (p. 13) because of all the changes in her life – the new baby, starting high school, and so on.

- What else makes her feel worried?
- How do you feel when big changes happen in your life?
- Write about a time when in your life when you went through a big change that made you feel scared or nervous.
  - How did it turn out?
  - Were you surprised by anything that happened?

One of the first things that tells Milly that she is in a new world when she visits Blanca is when she sees mysies living in people's hair.

- What are the mysies?
- Do we have mysies here? What do we have instead?
- Would life be easier if our 'big' emotions were creatures we had to care for?
  - Make a list of five advantages, and five disadvantages, of mysies.
- Imagine that your emotions appeared as mysies – creatures living outside your body. Which five emotions do you think would be mysies?
  - What would each one look like?
  - Zollo Rainbird has to put his temper mysie into a cage to keep in under control. Which of your mysies do you think would be the strongest?
  - How would you control it?

Why do you think Victor turns into a mouse in some places?

- How different do you think the world would look if you were a mouse?
- Write a day in the life of Victor the mouse.

## After Reading

In the book, Eliza Vanda keeps three buttons from each 'pocket' that she's visited.

- Why does she do this?
- Invent a place that Eliza Vanda might have travelled to. What kind of people live there?
  - Are they the same or different from us?
  - Draw the three buttons that would take you to a place like that.

Mrs Meaney is mean to Milly, her father and Eliza Vanda, even when they are polite to her.

- What do you think Mrs Meaney is so angry about?
- Milly shows great kindness towards her when she convinces Eliza Vanda to help free Sultan from the mirror, even though Mrs Meaney has been so awful to them. What does Milly say to convince Eliza Vanda?
- Most people aren't born thinking the worst of everyone the way Mrs Meaney does, something (or a series of things) happens to make them think or be that way. What do you think might have happened to Mrs Meaney?
- Write the story of the day Mrs Meaney adopted Sultan. Why is he so special to her?

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# Classroom Resources

The idea of home is explored in many different ways in *Eliza Vanda's Button Box*. There is Milly, who is not feeling as comfortable at home as she has previously; Eliza Vanda, who has no permanent home; and there's Todd, who feels more at home in the frog pond than a palace.

- What does the word 'home' mean to you? As a class, brainstorm all the possible meanings and places that this word can connote.
- How important is it to have a home?
- What does having a home give you?
- Milly has a home with her father and Julie, but it's changing. As much as she's excited about Flora coming home, it means that Milly doesn't feel as 'at home' in her home as she used to.
  - Why does Milly feel so confused about her home changing?
  - How does she come to be more comfortable with the way her home is changing?
- Eliza Vanda has 'no fixed address'. What does this mean?
  - What does Eliza Vanda have in her life that she might not if she had a fixed address?
  - If Eliza Vanda did have a home, what do you think it would look like?

As well as being set in the real world, parts of *Eliza Vanda's Button Box* are set in the fantasy worlds of Blanca, Shimmer and Gallop. One of the skills of Emily Rodda as a writer is that she doesn't tell us when Milly has travelled to a new world, she *shows* us.

- Identify as many elements of each of these words which identifies them as 'different worlds' as you can.
- As well as fantasy objects or creatures, Rodda uses new words or languages to show that Milly is somewhere other than the real world. How many of these can you find?
  - Write a definition for each of these words.
  - In the same way that she never *tells* us Milly has travelled between world, Rodda only *shows* us what these new words mean; we come to understand them from the context in which they've been used. Using one of the new words you've found, go back to the first time it was used in the novel and write an explanation of how you came to understand what the word meant.

Eliza Vanda calls the various worlds she goes to 'patches', as if she travels around a huge patchwork quilt. Our world is just one patch among many, and Tidgy Bay is a tiny 'pocket' in that patch.

- Bring same-size squares of fabric or gift wrap from home or decorate a square of paper any way you like.
- Then stick the squares together on a big sheet of paper or cardboard to make a class 'quilt'.
- Give every patch a name to reflect the student or 'world' it comes from to make the quilt like Eliza Vanda's magic universe.
  - The names in the book are Blanca, Shimmer, Gallop and Bees-Nees. The name of each of these worlds reflects something about it. Think about how the name of each patch of your class quilt could reflect something about where it comes from. For example, for a student who loves to paint, their patch could be called 'Brush'.

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# Classroom Resources

Write a book report on the book.

- Talk about what you liked, and what you didn't like, making sure that you give good reasons for your opinions.
- Include the three most important topics you think *Eliza Vanda's Button Box* explores, and what you can learn about them from reading the novel.
- Read your reports out loud in class.
  - Do other people have the same opinion as you?
  - What have you thought about differently after hearing other people's opinions of the novel?
- Publish your reviews on your school or class blog.

## About the Author

Emily Rodda's first book, *Something Special*, was published with Angus & Robertson in 1984. It marked the beginning of a career that has seen her become one of the most successful, prolific and versatile writers in Australia.

Since then, Emily has written or co-authored over a hundred books for children. Her children's books range from picture books to YA novels, and include the award-winning Rowan of Rin series as well as the outstandingly successful Deltora Quest fantasy series. A full-time writer since 1994, Emily has won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year award six times. And published in 2019, *His Name Was Walter* was the winner of six awards, including the prestigious Prime Minister's Literary Award.

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